

this House? Who is it that our Republican majority is representing, and who is it that people who are fighting for a minimum wage increase are representing?

This is a cartoon from the National Journal. How long does it take to make \$8,840? Full-time minimum wage worker, it takes this poor woman one year, because most of them are women. And the average CEO of a large U.S. corporation? Half a day.

So we do need to raise the minimum wage.

Finally, I keep coming back to this poster, because it so accurately describes what is going on in Washington today with this new Republican majority. It says, "The 104th Congress may be the worst in 50 years."

And while we cannot get an increase, a vote on increasing the minimum wage, we learned that the GOP has decided that they want their committee Chairs to look into abuses of the Clinton administration and of labor organizations. This very well could go down in history as the worst Congress in 50 years.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

URGING BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise again to urge bipartisan support for the minimum wage increase and there is great precedent for such an effort. The last time the minimum wage was raised—in 1989—135 Republicans in the House voted for it, including Mr. GINGRICH, 36 Republicans in the Senate voted for it, including Mr. DOLE, and President Bush signed the bill into law.

Since that increase, according to the Center on Budget Priorities, "Inflation has eroded nearly all effects of this increase and the annual value of the minimum wage has returned to its 1989 level."

In other words, if we want our workers to have the same earning power in 1996 that they had in 1989, a modest, two-step increase in the minimum wage is required.

But, the bipartisan spirit from 1989 appears to be missing in 1996, at least among Republican leaders.

One Republican leader wants to abolish the minimum wage, another is quoted as saying that minimum wage families "do not exist," and a third has vowed to "commit suicide" before voting for the minimum wage increase.

Mr. Speaker, the American worker has not changed in 7 years—they still need a fair wage.

What has happened to the Republican Party?

Between 1979 and 1992 the number of working poor in America increased by 44 percent.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would not promote a policy to help the working poor if it was shown that such a policy would substantially hurt small businesses.

According to the best evidence I have seen, a modest increase in the minimum wage will help the working poor, without hurting small businesses.

A recent survey of employment practices in North Carolina after the 1991 minimum wage increase, found that there was no significant drop in employment and no measurable increase in food prices.

The survey also found that workers' wages actually increased by more than the required change.

In another study, the State of New Jersey raised its minimum wage to \$5.05 while Pennsylvania kept its minimum wage at \$4.25.

The researchers found that the number of low wage workers in New Jersey actually increased with an increase in the wage, while those in Pennsylvania remained the same.

In 1991, the increase enjoyed bipartisan support, with President George Bush signing the bill.

Since 1991, the minimum wage has remained constant, while the cost of living has risen 11 percent.

If the Republican leadership in the House would allow a vote, I believe we would pass the minimum wage increase—with a bipartisan vote.

It is the right thing to do; it is the fair thing to do.

I care about small businesses, and it will not hurt small businesses.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr. GUTKNECHT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. BENTSEN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. BENTSEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

WHAT BUSINESS SAYS ABOUT MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas [Mr. DICKEY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk in opposition to the minimum wage increase from the standpoint of what business would have to say about this. I do not know if that has been brought into this discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I am an employer, I am a restaurant owner, I own two different restaurants in Pine Bluff, AR, as well as being a politician. This is 100 percent politics that we are talking about here and not any of economy or not any from consideration of the people who are involved.

I first want to say that the people who pay the price of the minimum wage are the consumers. They do it in one of two ways. They either pay a higher price or they pay with less service when they go to purchase things and they go into the marketplace.

What people do not understand and what may need to be clarified in this discussion is what goes into the higher price. If you are in the restaurant business, you think, well, the labor that you have to pay is all that you would experience.

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There is the tax, the additional tax, the payroll tax that comes from the additional pay. But there is also another factor, and it kind of compounds, and that is that the lettuce that is bought from the store or brought in is going to be at a higher cost because of the minimum wage. The meat, the condiments, all of the things that go into making the product are going to be higher.

So the restaurant owner or the business owner is sitting, looking, and thinking, what is the consumer able to stand? The first reaction is that we need to cut the number of employees because we have got price as a barrier in so many instances. When that is the case, then they usually cut the most inexperienced employee, leaving the other employees more stressed and less able to handle the press of business.

If that does not work and then you start adding back the employees, then you are faced with facing the consumer with a higher cost of the item. Now, when that happens, the consumer then has to deal with one or both of these issues, higher price or less service, and they then make choices that most of the time will bring about less sales.

When you have less sales and you confirm that in an operation, and you do that on a month-to-month basis, you then start cutting employees because the sales are down. Now, that is what can happen, it probably will happen in this particular case, and it is not necessary.

From the employee's standpoint, there is another viewpoint that needs to be looked at. The employees who are there know that when they come in to work at a minimum wage, that they are coming at a training wage, and that this is something where they probably are more of a liability to a business or an industry than they are an asset at the early stages. So they work up.

When they work up and they try to progress in this area, they have to do it in relationship to other employees. So if you have an employee who is given a raise, that employee is compared to